# Negotiating Privilege: Images of Identity in the Prologues of El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega

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> Un antártico, nacido en el Nuevo Mundo, allá debajo de nuestro hemisferio, y que en la leche mamó la lengua general de los indios del Perú, ¿qué tiene que ver con hacerse intérprete entre italianos y españoles?
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> An antarctic, born in the New World, there under our hemisphere, and that through his mother's milk drank the common language of the Peruvian Indians, what does he have to do with interpreting between Italians and Spaniards?[1]
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> —El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, "Prólogo," *Historia General del Perú*

El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539-1616) is remembered as the first author born in the New World to respond to the European historiography of his continent of origin (Mazzotti, 197). The Peruvian mestizo—mestizo referring to his mixed origin of Spanish conquistador father and Incan mother—wrote three historical works during his adult life in Spain: *La Florida del Inca* (The Inca's Florida, 1604), *Comentarios Reales de Los Incas* (Royal Commentaries of the Incas, 1609), and the posthumous *Historia General del Perú* (General History of Peru), published in 1617. Within these works, his prologues hold a singular importance, as it is within the prologue that Garcilaso self-authorizes his texts based on the rigorous manipulation of his perceived identity. Garcilaso layers his mestizo identity, an identity disconnected from systems of privilege in seventeenth century Spain, by constructing himself as fulfilling archetypal roles within the prologues. Garcilaso's presentation of his social positioning within the prologues presents a compelling historical experience of a privileged yet subjugated identity whose dissonance was exploited to create power. Through the careful negotiation of his own identity position, El Inca is able to earn the privilege of engaging with the historiography of the Americas—that of Perú in

[1] Translations are my own

particular. As other scholars have shown, through his intervention into American history Garcilaso privileges the role of intercultural mediators, personally shape the representation of Incan history, and directly challenges prior Spanish accounts[2].

The contradictory position of "dominated yet privileged colonial subject" (Mazzotti, 211) that Garcilaso occupies can be approached through the modern theory of intersectionality. Intersectionality, a theory whose origins lie in Kimberlé Crenshaw's description of the multiple categories of exclusion experienced by women of color in the United States, understands social identity through the "interaction between" various "categories of difference" (Davis, 68). While it was originally used to articulate concerns about interlocking power systems that resulted in an experience of "double jeopardy" for women of color, it has since been expanded by other authors to discuss the active construction of "dominant positionality" (Levine-Rasky, 239). This conception of intersectionality argues that the existence, and definition of, the "other" is what allows for the construction of "privilege, a normalized identity, status, rewards, and dominance" (Levine-Rasky, 247). These constructions are absolutely contingent upon a rigorous policing of difference, which is not altogether unlike the violent acts and discourses of differentiation in Spanish history.

Spain has a documented history of concern with difference during the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, as is apparent in Garcilaso's biography. In his first work, *La traducción del indio de los tres Diálogos de Amor de León Hebreo* (The Indian's Translation of the Three Dialogues of Love by León Hebreo), published in 1590, Garcilaso translates the Italian poetry of

[2] See Voigt on the privileging of captives as bicultural mediators, Mazzotti on the restructuring of Andean history by Garcilaso, and Sommer on the challenges Garcilaso makes to prior Spanish accounts in *Comentarios Reales*.

a member of Spain's exiled Jewish population. The 1492 expulsion of the Jewry was itself an event that crystallized the importance of identity categories within Spain, as the punishment of that identity was exile. In response to this, the poet who wrote the works that Garcilaso translated would change his name from Yehuda Abravanel to León Hebreo (León the Jew) while exiled in Italy. The name change defied his exclusion from Spain, as the displaced poet signed his name "Jew' in bold Spanish strokes" (Sommer, 392). As Doris Sommer points out, Garcilaso's choice to translate Hebreo could represent an identification between two bicultural individuals who struggled with Spanish concerns about the identities of "Jew" or "native." A more violent engagement with difference occurs through Garcilaso's participation in the quelling of the sixteenth century revolt of *moriscos*—Spanish subjects of Moorish descent—during the Alpujarras War (1568-1571) (Sommer, 386). Ethnic identity drew battle lines in the south of Spain during the Alpujarras War, clearly demonstrating the historical significance of social identity.

The historical identification of "mestizo" complicated the Spanish definition of difference, as Iberian blood was mixed with that of the subjugated indigenous. Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda's famous debates in Valladolid (1550-1551) make clear that the indigenous peoples of the New World were understood in a largely paternalistic sense. While Sepúlveda viewed war against the indigenous as a righteous and just response to their inherent inferiority, Las Casas rather argued for the capacity of the indigenous to "cease to be culturally different" (Brunstetter, 413) through conversion. Although their views on what is to be done with the natives—conversion or slaughter—differs extremely, both authors assign negative cultural difference to the indigenous peoples that they mention. In the eyes of the Spanish, mestizo children inherited indigenous inferiority.

Garcilaso describes an encounter with a Spanish schoolmaster who expresses a very frank opinion about his indigenous identity in the prologue to *Historia General del Perú*: the man openly asks El Inca why an American native would undertake the translation of León Hebreo's poetry. As the schoolmaster Don Francisco Murillo states, "un antártico, nacido en el Nuevo Mundo, allá debajo de nuestro hemisferio, y que en la leche mamó la lengua general de los indios del Perú, ¿qué tiene que ver con hacerse intérprete entre italianos y españoles?" (An antarctic, born in the New World, there under our hemisphere, and that through his mother's milk drank the common language of the Peruvian Indians, what does he have to do with interpreting between Italians and Spaniards?) (Garcilaso, *Historia General* 16). The paternalistic ideas of Sepulveda and Las Casas rear their heads as Murillo positions Garcilaso "under" the European hemisphere, and questions his right to speak on European culture. Garcilaso's answer, that it had been "temeridad soldadesca" (soldierly temerity) (*Historia General* 16) that motivated him to write the work, demonstrates his ability to negotiate within a system that questioned his membership. He is able to emphasize his role as a Spanish soldier in a way which complicates Murillo's intent to define him as inferior.

History tells us that this was not a successful strategy for many of the Peruvian mestizos living in Spain. Even those of noble Incan blood, as Garcilaso was on his mother's side, could not rely on that imperial legacy to aid them. According to José Anadón, "the general wretchedness and poverty of the mestizos of Imperial Inca blood who lived in Spain during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is well-documented" (150). In other words, with regard to what Levine-Rasky terms "social position"—referring to the relation of identity positioning with resources—even mestizos with royal ancestry were disfavored. This seems to hold true in the case of Garcilaso, whose trip to—and education in—Spain were funded by his father's will

(Zamora, 2). Later, he would come into a further sum of money from the will of his uncle Alonso de Vargas, cementing a social position with respect to resources that was largely mediated through a connection to Spain (Anadón, 155). Yet, Levine-Rasky draws on the prior work of Floya Anthias in order to make an important distinction between this material social position and the concept of "social positioning" or how "different groups define, negotiate, and challenge their positions" (Levine-Rasky, 242). It is on that discursive ground that El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega would stake his claim.

At this point it is worth mentioning that El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega was born, in 1539, under the name of Gómez Suárez de Figueroa (Zamora, 1). It was only after traveling to Spain that the author began to define himself as Garcilaso de la Vega—the first case documented in 1563 (Avalle-Arce, 42). The name comes from his father Sebastián, but would have been most recognizable in Spain as "the famous Castilian poet" of the same name (Avalle-Arce, 44)[3]. With this new name, Garcilaso thus negotiates authorial privilege within his positioning as a mestizo author. By further appending the honorific title "Inca"—once used to describe the empire's supreme leader, such as "the eighth Inca, Wiraqucha" (Mazzotti, 200)—Garcilaso created a consciously bicultural name that emphasized a Spanish literary tradition alongside imperial Incan authority.

Although Incan authority may not have been based in material wealth, El Inca negotiates within a subjugated mestizo identity by alluding to sources of privilege in the dual systems of his heritage. He does not deny his status as a mestizo—he capitalizes upon it by decisively stating that "por ser nombre impuesto por nuestros padres y por su significación me lo llamo yo a boca

[3] Garcilaso de la Vega (1503-1536) was a Spanish poet considered the first great poet of Golden Age Literature

llena, y me honro con él" (because it is a name imposed by our parents and for its significance I call myself by it openly, and I honor myself with it) (Garcilaso, *Comentarios Reales* 708). El Inca's use of the term mestizo highlights it as a point of access to his heritage, to each of his parents lineage, even though in general within the New World "si a uno de ellos le dicen 'sois un mestizo' o 'es un mestizo,' lo toman por menosprecio" (if to one of them you say "you're a mestizo" or "he's a mestizo" they take it as an insult) (Garcilaso, *Comentarios Reales* 708).[4] Garcilaso re-interprets his bicultural identity, understood pejoratively on both sides of the Atlantic, into a symbol of his connection to multiple systems of authority that he synthesizes within his own name.

While Levine-Rasky's use of Floya Anthias' concept of social positioning seems an appropriate means to approach Garcilaso's negotiation within the identity of "mestizo," it would be anachronistic to state that the author engages with the modern theory. Yet, as Kathy Davis notes, black feminists "had already underscored the importance of theorizing multiple identities and sources of oppression" (73) before the development of intersectionality. The power of the theory, for Davis, is that it provided a novel way of approaching what had already been described. Perhaps intersectionality can also provide a novel reason for scholars to look backwards, and provide a new audience, with fresh concerns, for authors like El Inca. Regardless, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega provides a historical example of the successful negotiation of privilege within a complex mestizo identity experienced at the intersection of colonizer and colonized.

[4] See Zamora, page 49, for an analogy of Garcilaso's claiming of mestizo to the use of the n-word within African American communities

What El Inca wins through this negotiation is the aforementioned place as the first American-born historian to engage with the history of his native country in a European setting. Moreover, his work on pre-Hispanic Perú, *Comentarios Reales de los Incas*, became the authoritative text on the Incan empire for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Zamora, 4). Furthermore, as Lisa Voigt states, "Garcilaso perhaps gained most attention on both sides of the Atlantic when his work was interpreted as advocating violence, to which the prohibition of his work at the time of the eighteenth century Tupac Amaru rebellion can attest" (Voigt, 148). From a social position whose fellow inhabitants were described as "wretched," Garcilaso wrote himself into the eyes of the world through his positioning of mestizo identity.

The idea of attention to the prologues is one that can be credited to Garcilaso himself, as he consistently draws attention to his own work during these preliminary sections. This is clearest within the prologue to *La Historia General del Perú*, which directly reprints the dedication of *La Traducción del Indio* in the middle of the prologue. *La Traducción* is further mentioned in *La Florida del Inca*, in which Garcilaso describes his "esperanzas de mayor contento y recreación del ánimo" (hopes of greater contentment and recreation of spirit) in writing the work "como fue traducir los tres Diálogos de amor" (as was translating the Three Dialogues of Love) (746). Furthermore, *La Florida* references his writing of the as yet unpublished *Comentarios Reales*—"quedo fabricando, forjando y limando la del Perú, del origen de los reyes incas" (I am still fabricating, forging, and filing down the [history] of Peru, of the origin of the Incan kings) (Garcilaso, 746). *Comentarios Reales* in turn mentions *Historia General*, as the author mentions that "dos libros se quedan escribiendo de los sucesos que entre los españoles, en aquella mi tierra, pasaron" (two more books are still being written about the events that passed among the Spaniards in my land) (Garcilaso, 8). Each work connects in some

way to the others, creating an intertextual relationship between El Inca's works through the prologues.

Aside from these specific intertextual links, the prologues are the place in which Garcilaso defines his identity within the work. In each of these prologues El Inca makes an argument for how his work should be understood through the development of what I am calling discrete "images" of identity, including the "scribe," "translator," "fruit," and the previously described "soldier." The term "image" seems appropriate when taking into account the "shuttling" that Doris Sommer identifies between the strategies of authorization within the body of *Comentarios Reales*. It does not seem as if El Inca is interested in making one discrete and infallible case for his authority, but rather that in making gestures towards various sites of authority. As such, my analysis of the prologues will focus on discrete self-images that the author develops within the work—rather than arguing for a unifying identification.

Within *La Florida del Inca*, Garcilaso portrays himself as a "scribe" for an unidentified informant who participated in the Hernando de Soto expedition of Florida (Gonzalo Silvestre), while also employing two further unpublished accounts. While the author openly admits that he is interested in broadening representations of the indigenous, he suggests that he does so through the use of Spanish sources. Furthermore, El Inca constructs a mutual dependency between himself and his sources that makes the role of "scribe" essential. There is some deficiency which prevents each of the sources that Garcilaso encounters from publishing without his hand. Through an expansive reading of the term "scribe," El Inca ultimately argues for his place as an indigenous author within European historiography.

In the later *Comentarios Reales de los Incas*, Garcilaso identifies himself as a "translator" concerned with the accurate communication of a history mediated by linguistic difference. The

author justifies his revision of Spanish sources by drawing on the scholarly tradition of humanist philology—which privileges the original meaning found in the languages of historical civilizations. Furthermore, humanist philology allowed for an understanding of language itself as "an instrument of correction, persuasion, and reform" (Zamora, 17). As the historical language of the Incas, what the author describes as "la lengua general de los indios del Peru" (the common language of the Peruvian Indians) (Garcilaso, *Comentarios Reales* 10) happens to be the author's native tongue. Capitalizing on that proximity, Garcilaso alleges that he is only interested glossing prior Spanish accounts to help them avoid the many pitfalls of indigenous language, and in doing so makes a humanist argument for the depth and breadth of that language. However, the language itself is introduced in a way that emphasizes the difficulty of translation for anyone but Garcilaso himself. As in *La Florida*, El Inca is a necessary guide to inaccessible knowledge. The identity of "translator" allows Garcilaso to position himself as an expert due to his knowledge of native language, and to argue for the value of that langue on humanist terms.

As previously mentioned, the prologue of *Historia General del Perú* is a combination of new writing and the reprinting of a prior work, and practices self-identification in a slightly different manner. While the new work features the interesting vignette in which El Inca presents himself as a "soldier" in order to obfuscate his connection to the New World, a more interesting image is developed through the portrayal of the author's work as "fruta nueva del Perú" (new fruit from Perú) (Garcilaso, *Historia General* 16). An introductory address to the people of Perú points to the natural beauty and fecundity of the land as inspiration for excellence, and the subsequent inclusion of the prior prologue functions to indicate that the author's work itself represents the intellectual bounty of Perú. Perú's mercantilist exploitation by Spain is transformed into an argument for its people's inherent excellence: they reflect the value of the

gold found in their mountains. The image of the author's work as "fruit" from a fertile land negotiates for the capacity of Perú and its peoples to partake in the value that was being extracted from their land by the Spanish.

El Inca's use of particular images of identity to negotiate social positioning takes the form of the strategic obfuscation of certain aspects of his identity depending on the situation. The absence of an intersectional system capable of synthesizing multi-level experiences of identity could perhaps have allowed for the increased importance of these particular images or categories. Rather than sitting at one intersectional locus, throughout his prologues the author moves through various expressions and roles—images of identity. That movement would be hampered by a fixed understanding of layered experience—while the totality of its success seems to describe just that. As Kathy Davis stated above, intersectionality did not create the layered experience of identity—it rather created a new means of discussing them. Furthermore, it is not as if intersectionality has ended the capacity for social positioning—the term was created in response to the theory—yet the effectiveness of Garcilaso's management of these "images" could indicate the historical lack of a framework which synthesized the experience of identity in terms of power. It is impossible to reenter the seventeenth century Spanish context, but perhaps new connections can be found through the consideration of intersectionality's conversation with the discrete expressions of identity found in the work of El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega.

1. A Word on Dedications, and The Iberian Union

Before moving to analyses of the development of archetypal images within the prologues, it seems important to address another aspect of the works. Aside from prefatory material addressed

to the reader, or the inhabitants of Perú (as in *Historia General*), each of the texts studied here also include dedicatory letters. While *Historia General del Perú* is dedicated to the Virgin Mary herself, the dedications of *La Florida del Inca* and *Comentarios Reales de los Incas* are both addressed to members of the Braganza family of Portugal. The choice of these Portuguese nobles as dedicatory figures is made significant through the context of the Iberian Union from 1580-1640, when Portugal was integrated into the Spanish monarchy—also the time during which Garcilaso published.

When Philip II of Spain claimed the Portuguese throne in 1580, after the death of the last king of the Aviz dynasty, Portugal entered into a political union with Spain in a subordinate position. That subordination would end at the ascension of the Braganza family to the throne in 1640, creating the possibility that Garcilaso's dedicatory call for the "real protección" (royal protection) (Garcilaso, *Comentarios Reales* 5) of the Braganza family may have been an act of identification with a noble family of another empire that was also subject to the Spanish crown. Garcilaso argues for the significance of the Incan Empire through his sympathetic approach to Portuguese nobility—gesturing towards parity between the two empires.

El Inca's identification with the Portuguese is most specific in the dedication to *La Florida del Inca*, in which the author makes an extended digression on the favor that he experienced in Portugal. Garcilaso tells us that he has been so well-treated by the citizens of Portugal that it is as if he was a "hijo natural de alguna de ellas" (one of their natural sons) (Garcilaso, *La Florida del Inca* 739). El Inca argues for his acceptance within Portuguese society, perhaps suggesting the similarity between their positions as non-Spanish subjects to the Spanish crown.

Garcilaso's use of the term "hijo natural" in this context becomes striking when considering that it generally referred to "illegitimate children" (Sommer, 388). Yet El Inca's usage of the

term is clearly not pejorative, as he is using it to describe the privilege that he experienced among the Portuguese. There is then a dual function to the author's use of "hijo natural": it both allows Garcilaso to approach Portuguese authority and argues for the appropriate treatment of children such as himself (his parents had never married). Much as Garcilaso embraces the term "mestizo," disregarding its conception as an insult, here he repurposes "hijo natural" into a desirable state indicating the reception of favor.

Garcilaso's choice of Portuguese nobility as his dedicatory subjects, understood within the context of the Iberian Union, could be seen to negotiate for the privilege of Incan identity. Based upon the parallel position of the Inca and the Portuguese as subject to the Spanish crown, Garcilaso constructs a personally beneficial similarity within the dedications to *La Florida del Inca* and *Comentarios Reales de los Incas*. Moreover, he takes the same opportunity to re-conceptualize his identity as "hijo natural" as beneficial—in a way which recalls his claim of authority through the identity of "mestizo."

2. Garcilaso as "Scribe" In *La Florida del Inca*

In what seems like a bold claim, the "Proemio al lector" (preface to the reader) (*La Florida* 739) of El Inca Garcilaso de La Vega's *La Florida del Inca* openly states that his work seeks to bring parity to the heroic actions of conquistadors and natives. The intent of his writing the account of his anonymous source, identified by modern scholars as the conquistador Gonzalo Silvestre, is both "para honra y fama de la nación española" (for the honor and fame of the Spanish nation" and "no menos de los indios que en la historia se mostraren y parecieren dignos del mismo honor" (no less for the Indians that in the story show themselves and seem to be

worthy of the same honor) (*La Florida* 742). In a way this sentence in itself encapsulates the rhetorical move that Garcilaso makes within the prologue to *La Florida*: through El Inca's role as Silvestre's scribe native glory becomes Spanish history. Through negotiating the position of scribe, El Inca's proximity to the New World is obfuscated by his proximity to Spanish sources.

In discussing the origin of the work as coming from a series of friendly chats, the author develops proximity to Spain. El Inca writes that "conversando mucho tiempo y en diversos lugares con un caballero, grande amigo mío" (conversing for a long time and in many places with a gentleman, a great friend of mine) and "oyéndole muchas y muy grandes hazañas" (listening to his many great deeds) he becomes interested in recording the story that his friend reveals (*La Florida* 741). El Inca has stumbled upon an unknown account, a permission to intervene in the telling of history, yet it is still an account positioned as a monument to Spanish glory. Moreover, as José Anadón writes in "History as Autobiography in Garcilaso Inca" the account becomes a "monument to friendship, the kind of noble friendship which Garcilaso would have studied" (157). Anadón finds the friendship that El Inca foregrounds in the prologue to *La Florida del Inca* bears similarities to Neoplatonic forms—situating the anonymous Silvestre's role in the narrative as a linkage to socially prized forms of connection.

The friendship between Silvestre and Garcilaso is further punctuated by proximity to achievements in war and in letters—presenting a further linkage to the socially valent identity of caballero. *Caballero*, was a prototypical identity in Renaissance Spain that Margarita Zamora describes in her chapter "Language, Authority, and Indigenous History" as a "paradigm of masculine excellence" that "combined nobility of spirit and military prowess with the cultivation of letters and the art of verbal eloquence" (42). El Inca terms his friend "caballero" at the beginning of the prologue, and it is easy to leap from the "great deeds" he mentions to images of

martial grace. Excellence in letters is rather won for Silvestre through his association with the astute prose of Garcilaso's prologue, while the author includes his own military service as an interjection into the act of writing. As Garcilaso tells us, "lo estorbaban los tiempos y las ocasiones que se ofrecieron, ya de guerra, por acudir yo a ella" (the times and occasions offered got in the way of it, now from war, for my attendance of it) (*La Florida* 741), referring to his service of the Spanish in the Alpujarras War (López-Baralt, 741n3). In the intervening time "se gastaron más de viente años" (more than twenty years were spent) (*La Florida* 741) before the two were able to reunite. Time lends gravity to the noble friendship that Garcilaso develops between himself and Silvestre—a friendship that is compounded by its allusions to paradigms of masculine excellence. Through the use of the caballero prototype, El Inca and Silvestre become two noble equals who partake in a large scale historical project motivated by noble friendship.

That discourse of equality is developed through arguments that Garcilaso makes about the mutual dependency between himself and Silvestre. El Inca writes "muerto yo, no había él de tener quien le incitase y serviese de escribiente, y, faltándome el, no sabía yo de quien poder haber la relación que el podía darme" (if I died, he wouldn't have had anyone to encourage him or serve him as scribe, and, lacking him, I wouldn't have known from whom I could get the relation that he could give me) (Garcilaso, 741). Although the term "scribe" suggests a service given to a dictating authority, El Inca positions it as an active role without which Silvestre's story could not have been told. While service to Spain, through the revelation of honor and glory, is earlier leveraged as a motivation for writing, Garcilaso ultimately positions himself as a necessary point of access to that glory.

The two additional Spanish soldiers that El Inca introduces as sources for the text, Alonso de Carmona and Juan Coles, reflect the mutual dependency first developed between Garcilaso

and Silvestre. The narrative that each provides is faulty in some way—requiring El Inca as a moderator. From Carmona, Garcilaso receives, unsolicited, two separate relations of the soldier's time in Florida and Peru (*La Florida* 743). On these relations Garcilaso remarks that "la relacion de Florida, aunque muy breve y sin orden de tiempo ni de los hechos, y sin nombrar provincias, sino muy pocas, cuenta, saltando de unas partes a otras, los hechos mas notables de nuestra historia" (the relation of Florida, even though very brief and with neither order of time nor events, and without naming the provinces, except for a few, tells, jumping from some parts to others, the most notable events of our story) (*La Florida* 745). In the same breath that El Inca praises the utility of his source, he critiques its construction. Carmona fails to account for details that the adept author can provide, but still manages to verify El Inca's credibility. This makes sense given that El Inca later mentions that Carmona "no quiso más de que sus parientes y vecinos leyesen las cosas que había visto por el Nuevo Mundo" (he wanted no more than that his relatives and neighbors could read the things that he had seen in the New World) (*La Florida* 744). Carmona is but a simple soldier whose tale was never meant to go beyond his small circle—the scribe's work is to dress him elegantly. Ultimately, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega constructs Carmona's source as raw material that he must process into a functional story in order to negotiate further importance and liberty within the role of scribe.

The work of Juan Coles, the second soldier on whose account Garcilaso relies, is more literally raw material. Although Garcilaso also qualifies Juan Coles' relation of Florida as being "desordenada y breve" (disorganized and brief) (Garcilaso, 743), the major problem with the text lies in its physical state. While Coles' text had found its way into the hands of a printer, by the time that Garcilaso encounters it the manuscript itself has been damaged (*La Florida* 744). As El Inca personally attests, "Yo las vide, y estaban muy maltradas, comidas de las medias de polilla

y ratones" (I saw them, and they were extremely maltreated, eaten from the middle by moths and mice) (Garcilaso, 744). Coles work cannot be published alone, not for Carmona's simple humility but for the material faults of his manuscript. For the third time, a Spanish source cannot be brought to light without the restorative power of El Inca.

Within the prologue to La Florida del Inca, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega finds himself in the possession a Spanish oral relation, and two further accounts, of the Hernando de Soto expedition to Florida—each requires his hand in order to come to light. While El Inca finds openly finds himself "obligado de ambas naciones, porque soy hijo de un español y de una india" (obligated to both nations, because I am the son of a Spaniard and an Indian) (Garcilaso, 741), admitting a proximity to the New World that would have made him immediately suspect as a narrator, his positioning as scribe allows him to assuage fears of bias with calming Spanish voices. Yet, it is also clear that El Inca constructs the identity of scribe in a way that privileges his role within the work, as each of the Spanish sources he includes necessitates his participation as friend, reviewer, or restorer. Taking into account El Inca's negotiation of "scribe" as essential, and given that the anonymous Gonzalo Silvestre "had died some fifteen years before La Florida was published in 1605" (Zamora, 43) while the other two tales remain unpublished, it seems clear that El Inca negotiates the identity of scribe in order to give his own writing greater legitimacy. The image of scribe, positioning Garcilaso's pen behind Spanish lips, allowed the author to safely approach European historiography.

## 2. El Inca Translates: The Canonization of Quechua in *Comentarios Reales de los Incas*

*Comentarios Reales de los Incas* is a work that is concerned with a corrective telling of a past imperial Incan history. Yet, it is also a correction of which the author is deeply self-aware—insisting that he will limit himself to "comento y glosa" (comments and gloss) (Garcilaso, *Comentarios Reales* 8) on existing Spanish sources. The source of those comments and gloss comes from the autobiographical proximity of the author to the history of which he writes. As José Anadón remarks in "History as Autobiography in Garcilaso Inca," "the whole design and construct of the *Royal Commentaries* appear explicitly linked to Garcilaso's life" (159). The author engages with a history that he is connected to through his mother's royal Incan heritage, as well as through his upbringing in the former capitol of the Incan empire. El Inca writes "como natural de Cuzco" (as a native of Cuzco) (*Comentarios Reales* 7), a native son concerned with the representation of his hometown. Garcilaso writes that even though certain major events had been explored in Spanish works "escríbenlas tan cortamente que aun las muy notorias para mí [de la manera que las dicen] las entiendo mal" (they write them so curtly that even the most notorious for me (because of the manner that they say them) I cannot understand) (*Comentarios Reales* 7). The author is motivated to intervene because the Spanish have not been able to successfully chronicle even the most basic events of Incan history. Being raised in Cuzco is enough to know where the colonial authors are going amiss.

Furthermore, El Inca has a source, "aquel Inca, tio de mi madre" (that Inca, uncle of my mother) (*Comentarios Reales* 58) from whom he gains a firsthand account of Incan culture and history. Similar to the prologue of *La Florida del Inca*, Garcilaso has uncovered a new—yet inaccessible to anyone but him—source that permits his historical intervention. Rather differently, however, that source does not appear in the prologue. Instead, it is in Chapter 17 of Book 1 of *Comentarios Reales* that the figure of the old Incan grand-uncle first appears. The oral

text source is used to explore the depth of the Incan language—which we now know is the Andean indigenous tongue Quechua. The author is able to translate his uncle's tale, since he was raised speaking Quechua, but he admits that "no la he escrito con la majestad de palabras que el Inca habló ni con toda la significación" (I have not written it with the majesty of words that the Inca spoke, nor with all the meaning) (Garcilaso, *Comentarios Reales* 58). Quechua is a language that is described as possessing "majesty," and that is capable of containing great "meaning." That complexity of the language is what concerns El Inca within the prologue of *Comentarios Reales*, as throughout the preface he develops the various difficulties of its translation.

While proximity to the New World itself could be a preventative obstacle to the publication of history, *El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega* is able to position that proximity in relation to the question of translation. As El Inca writes in his prologue, the goal of his work, with regard to prior Spanish historians, is to "servirles de comento y glosa y de intérprete de muchos vocablos indios, que, como extranjeros en aquella lengua, interpretaron fuera de la propiedad de ella" (to serve them by comment and gloss and as interpreter of many Indian words, that, as foreigners in that language, they interpreted outside of its property) (*Comentarios Reales* 8). While the oral text of his Incan uncle becomes important within the body of the work, the prologue focuses on the breadth of Quechua as a language and develops the difficulty of successful Spanish translations. The Spanish become the ignorant savages with relation to Quechua, and their misinterpretation of the language lends Quechua an air of linguistic richness.

El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's linguistic concerns about the complexity of Quechua were linked by Margarita Zamora to the tenets of humanist philology within her book *Language, Authority, and Indigenous History in the Comentarios Reales de los Incas*. Humanist philology is

described by Zamora as a school of scholarship concerned with the corrective power of language to recover "the past in its authentic form" (16). The humanist's tools for the retrieval of the past were the original languages of the great civilizations of history: Latin, Hebrew, and Ancient Greek. Within *Comentarios Reales*, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega positions Quechua as the original language of the great civilization of the Incas. As Zamora argues, "Garcilaso's insistence on faithfulness to the original language in the translation and exegesis of Quechua terminology throughout the text echoes the main tenet of humanist philology from Lorenzo Valla to Fray Luis de Leon: fidelity to the original language" (60). An emphasis on the linguistic richness, and difference, of Quechua provided El Inca with humanist license to engage in historical correction.

Through inhabiting the role of "translator" El Inca is able to capitalize on humanist conceptions of language as a tool of historical revision. In a section of the prologue material titled "Advertencias acerca de la lengua general de los indios del Perú" (Warnings about the common language of the Peruvian Indians) (Garcilaso, *Comentarios Reales* 9) the author develops a deep and specific knowledge of linguistic concerns surrounding Quechua that discourages further Spanish translation. Within this section the author is careful to say that he will be only covering the language spoken in Cuzco, since the languages spoken throughout the provinces of Perú are "innumerables" (innumerable) (Garcilaso, *Comentarios Reales* 9). Garcilaso's gestural use of "innumerable" makes indigenous language unapproachable through its assertion of the unknowability of indigenous culture. Garcilaso asserts that inaccessibility of indigenous linguistics through alluding to its general breadth, yet he goes on to make linguistic comments that are extremely specific.

In particular, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega alienates the reader through the mysterious use of the word "este" (this) in regard to two linguistic errors that he discusses in the closing portion

of his "Advertencias." In two cases, the first referring to "este nombre vecino" (this noun vecino) and the second pairing to "Este nombre galpón" (this noun galpón), Garcilaso mentions the peculiarities of each word as if he is participating in an ongoing conversation (Garcilaso, *Comentarios Reales* 11). The use of "este" implies that the authors concerns about particular definitions of the terms "vecino" and "galpón," or the importance of these terms in any sense, should already be apparent to the reader. As editor López-Baralt notes: "A pesar de calificar el sustantivo 'galpón' con el pronombre 'este,' Garcilaso no ha hablado antes del tema… lo mismo sucede con la frase 'este nombre vecino" (Although the noun 'galpón' is qualified with the pronoun 'this,' Gariclaso has not mentioned this topic… the same occurs with 'this noun vecino') (*Commentarios Reales* 11n). El Inca does not explain why these terms in particular are relevant to the rest of his work—deluging the reader with examples of his specific knowledge. The paragraph discussing "vecino" gives one sentence stating that "se entendía en el Perú por los españoles que tenían repartimiento de indios" (was understood in Peru as the Spanish who had distribution of Indians) (Garcilaso, *Comentarios Reales* 11) before moving on to a discussion of coins.[5] Since the work that Garcilaso is prefacing refers to pre-hispanic history it is unclear what the specific relevance of "vecino" is—since it refers to Spaniards. The paragraph about "galpón," which we are told means "sala grande" (big room), connects to the Incans since they had rooms "tan grandes que servian de plaza para hacer sus fiestas" (so big that they served as plazas for their celebrations) (Garcilaso, *Comentarios Reales* 11). However, the connection of "galpón" to the work is still rather vague, since the "los españoles lo han introducido" (the Spanish introduced it). Rather than being a guide to the translation of Quechua, or even a useful

[5] "Repartimiento" refers to a colonial labor system in which indigenous peoples were assigned to serve the Spanish

foregrounding of confusing terms within the work, Garcilaso's "Adventencias" are just that—warnings. The examples of "vecino" and "galpon" reach beyond the subject matter of the work to warn European readers against approaching the confused and entangled relationship of Spanish and Quecha. The results of prior European attempts are described as "perjuicio y corrupción" (prejudice and corruption) (*Comentarios Reales* 10), so—from Garcilaso's perspective—it would be best to leave these things to an expert.

Garcilaso self-authorizes his writing of the *Comentarios Reales de los Incas* by explaining that he will serve prior Spanish accounts through a corrective translation of Quechua. In doing so he relies on humanist philological conceptions of language as a mode of historical access, and thereby positions Quechua as a language of historical and cultural relevance. Furthermore, in his linguistic discussion of the differences between Quechua and Spanish, Garcilaso warns the reader, rather than guiding them, and thereby asserts his unique expertise over the topic. Through the development of the image of "translator" El Inca is able to revise Spanish accounts of Incan Peru, yet he is not content to do only that. Within the positioning of translator Garcilaso, negotiates for the value of Quechua, and furthermore of Incan culture.

3. The Fruits of Labor: Garcilaso as Resource

In the prologue to the *Historia General del Perú* Garcilaso develops the image of Perú as a fertile land whose natural resources are inextricably linked to the excellence of its people. El Inca's own work is motivated by that natural excellence, and a further connection is drawn between the riches of land and riches of intellect. El Inca presents his work as of valuable tribute

from a land that seems capable of much more—his work is first of many "fruits" borne in fertile Perú. Or rather, his work *was* the first of many tributes.

While the prologue develops the natural and intellectual fecundity of Perú, it does so in reference the approval of Garcilaso's prior work by the King. Through a reprinting of the dedication to *La Traducción del Indio de los tres Diálogos de Amor de León Hebreo*, and an accompanying letter, Garcilaso is able to demonstrate the proven value of his work, and by extension Peru, in the eyes of the King. Since El Inca's work is shown to be important to figures of Spanish authority, his present work is authorized by prior royal approval.

In a prologue addressed to all of the natural-born inhabitants, of native and Spanish descent, within the "grande y riquisimo imperio del Perú" (grand and very rich empire of Peru) (Garcilaso, *Historia General* 9) Garcilaso presents the great value of his homeland as a motivation for his writing. It is notable that he describes his homeland as an empire, since Peru itself was referred to by the Spanish as a viceroyalty. El Inca's choice of diction is consistent with his reliance on the imperial history of the Inca, yet it modulates that idea to the present. The author's language calls for a kind of hierarchical synthesis that would privilege Spain through its possession of a Peruvian empire.

The author makes a similar argument within the reprinted royal dedication of *La Traducción,* as Garcilaso's heritage of Incan nobility is positioned as his motivation for writing. The author justifies his Incan heritage as important not for "vanagloria mía, sino para mayor majestad vuestra" (my vanity, but for your greater majesty) (Garcilaso, *Historia General* 13). It is good for Spain to be the master of powerful things, so El Inca positions the Incan legacy as an additive to Spanish glory. That reasoning seems to mesh well with the later positioning of Peru's natural wealth as motivation within *La Historia General del Perú*, as Garcilaso states that he is writing

"por dar a conocer al universo nuestro patria" (to make known to the universe our homeland)—an act which involves cataloging "las perlas y piedras preciosas" (the pearls and precious stones) that exist there (9). The products of Peru, both natural and intellectual, are carefully placed under Spanish authority, as in the reprinted prologue of *La Traducción* the author's work is described as the "tributo que se os debe por vuestros vasallos" (tribute that is owed you [Philip II] by your vassals) (Garcilaso, *Historia General* 12). Peru's position is that of a loyal, yet powerful, subject.

That position is nestled in an understanding of complementary material wealth and intellectual excellence. Throughout his address to the people of his homeland, El Inca creates a syncretic relationship between wealth and knowledge. Descriptions of "montes de oro y plata" (mountains of gold and silver) (Garcilaso, *Historia General* 9) give way to "venas de sangre generosa y minas de entendimientos" (veins of generous blood and mines of understanding) (*Historia General* 10). In a way that analogically recalls humanist philological ideas about the civilizing power of historical languages[6], El Inca synthesizes gold and generosity. Peru is possibility and promise—both materially and intellectually.

The value of that possibility is not verified by El Inca, but rather by the reactions of the Spanish to Peru and its people. One such reaction stems from Juan Cuéllar, a ranking priest who emotionally exclaims "quisiera ver una docena de vosotros en la Universidad de Salamanca" (I would wish to see a dozen of you all in the University of Salamanca) (Garcilaso, *Historia General* 10) in reference to Garcilaso and his fellow students. The use of the University of Salamanca signifies its historic significance as the oldest site of higher education in Spain—a

[6] "Nebrija's defense is at once a plea for the restoration of the original meaning of the Scriptures and a praise of the ancient tongues themselves as vehicles for the eradication of that linguistic chaos, that barbarian state, which threatens civilization" (Zamora, 26)

modern analog could be a teacher encouraging a student to apply to Harvard. Through the allusion to the University of Salamanca, El Inca positions Peruvian intellect as on par with that of Spain, yet the assertion itself comes from the Spanish Cuéllar. Garcilaso does take his old teacher's endorsement as an opportunity to synthesize the relationship between Peru and Spain through natural metaphors, as he waxes poetic that "podían florecer las nuevas plantas del Perú en aquel jardín y vergel de sabiduría" (the new plants of Peru could have flowered in that garden and orchard of wisdom) (*Historia General*, 10). Cuéllar's declaration, delivered with "tiernas lagrimas" (tender tears) (Garcilaso, *Historia General* 10), allows the author to argue for cross-pollination between the best minds of Peru and Spain. Nonetheless, synthesis is never demanded by Garcilaso—it is rather developed as desirable through the recurrence of natural imagery associated with value.

The reception of King Philip II of Spain becomes another medium through which Garcilaso argues for Peru's desirability, through his response to the reprinted dedications of *La Traducción*. The reader is told that his majesty reacted to the works by giving the following order to a subordinate: "Guardadme este libro, y cuando estuviéremos en el Escurial, acordadme que lo tenéis. Poneldo por escrito; no se os olvide" (Save me this book, and when we are in [the monastery] Escorial, remind me that we have it. Write it down, don't forget it.) (Garcilaso, *Historia General* 16). The King's insistence seems remarkable in this episode, as he both asks to be reminded about the book and demands that his servant write the command down. The commands of the king would seem to indicate a deep investment in El Inca's work. The anecdote continues once the King arrives at the monastery, as his majesty brings the book to the prior himself and states "Mirad que es fruta nueva del Perú" (Look, it is new fruit from Peru) (Garcilaso, *Historia General* 16). The Spanish king is shown to value the intellectual products of

his Peruvian subject, albeit in a vocabulary familiar to the discourse of natural value developed by Garcilaso.

Perhaps a better verb than "developed" would be "capitalized upon," when considering the historical dialogue of El Inca's work with the mercantilist relationship between the colony of Peru and Spain. Although mercantilism itself can be an umbrella term for a complex phenomenon, the important relation during the seventeenth century was that "Las metropolis europeas veían sus colonias no solo como una fuente de metales preciosos y materias primas, sino también como una fuente de demanda" (European metropoles viewed their colonies not only as a source of precious metals and raw materials, but also as a source of demand) (Rosas, 83). In other words, colonial economies where subjugated to the whims of European dictums on what natural resources would be taken, as well as what goods would become available. In specific, Jorge Rosas writes that the large-scale export of precious metals from seventeenth century Peru "permitió el crecimiento de la oferta de dinero en Europa" (permitted the growth of the supply of money in Europe) (79). El Inca's commentary on the natural resources of Peru comes during a time when those resources were funding cultural change throughout Europe, so El Inca takes the opportunity to suggest the same for Peru.

Through the development of a syncretic discourse on natural resources with intellectual achievement, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega jockeys for privilege within a Spanish colonial system that was exploiting those resources in Peru. El Inca conceives of an imperial Peru that can exist in support of Spain, and furthermore of a Peruvian public capable of great intellectual achievement. These views are articulated through Spanish mediators—presenting himself as valuable "fruit" from a fertile land whose fecundity is equaled by the intellectual capacity of its inhabitants.

## 4. Conclusions

In seventeenth-century Spanish society within which the definition of Iberian identity was contingent upon differentiation from such groups as Jews, Moors, and indigenous Americans, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega made the first intervention into European historiography by a scholar born in the New World. In order to do this, the author had to engage with the way in which he was understood, with the "image" of his identity. El Inca's prologues, therefore, become the site of radical self-definition—spaces in which the author develops discrete "images" through which he can be understood. Cynthia Levine-Rasky's articulation of Floya Anthias' concept of the process of "social positioning," a way of approaching how identity is "lived subjectively" (247), provides a framework that defines those images as significant negotiations of an identity position.

This project does not seek to classify Garcilaso on intersectional terms—it does not focus on the rigorous definition of his identity as it relates to systems of power—but it does seek to understand the significance of the images of identity that the author presents within his prologues. Intersectionality is the gateway to the concept of "social positioning" that aids in approaching the significance of those images. Further work could more specifically analyze the particularities of Garcilaso's place as a wealthy, male, mestizo author in the terms of class, gender, and race, and the Spanish colonial system itself would seem to be a place rife with interlocking power systems that can be unpacked. The Spanish colonies were un punto de choque, a place of collision, between well-developed indigenous empires and European intruders. The resulting political morass was a time in which identity categories had to be restructured, as indigenous Americans were forcibly assimilated into European hierarchies.

As identity reached a singular importance during this era, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega took care to engage with the identifiers he was assigned. In the cases of "mestizo" and "hijo natural," El Inca redefined pejorative identifiers as positive traits. "Mestizo" allowed him to claim the heritage of the Incan Empire and Spanish poets in the same breath, rather than dooming him to a life of political subjugation. While aligning himself with the partially subjugated Braganza family of Portugal in the dedication to *La Florida del Inca*, he also engaged with the term "hijo natural" by portraying the expression used for illegitimate mixed children as meaning "someone deserving of care."

Aside from these markers, the author also negotiates within the "images" previously described, roles the author takes on in the prologues in order to assert his authority to write. Within the prologue to *La Florida del Inca,* Garcilaso tells us that he writes as a scribe for an old Spanish friend of his, yet he expands that traditionally servile role into one of equal exchange. Garcilaso gives the service of writing to a source which would not have become public without his care—a care which he extends paternalistically to two written accounts of Spanish soldiers that he includes in the history. If Garcilaso is a scribe, he is a scribe who demands recognition.

In the prologue to *Comentarios Reales de los Incas* Garcilaso demands recognition for the beauty and depth of his native language of Quechua through inhabiting the role of translator. He states that he will gloss Spanish sources, but ultimately deeply undermines their credibility through an extended digression on the linguistic complexity of his mother tongue. Garcilaso is not a translator who serves to erase the difficulties of linguistic difference—he rather emphasizes them to privilege his language and his place as expert on it.

By taking on the image of "fruit" in the prefatory material to *Historia General de Perú* Garcilaso enters into a dialogue with the mercantilist system that exploited the natural resources

of his native country. He does not challenge that system, but rather chooses to engage within it by equating natural wealth with intellectual excellence. Through the synthesis of wealth and intellect, Garcilaso negotiates for the value of Peruvian identity by further synthesizing Spanish interest in material wealth with King Philip II's interest in his past literary products.

In each of these cases, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega engages with various sources of power—such as the prototype of the *caballero*, the school of humanist philology, and proximity to royalty—in order to construct "images" of identity that subjectively negotiate his authorial privilege. The result are masterfully written rhetorical prologues that above all seem to emphasize social positioning—subjective means through which Garcilaso augments his authority. They are compelling moments of access to a seventeenth century author with an important legacy in the history of the Americas, and they see him engage with what it meant to be an author 400 years ago. His prologues can show us who was allowed to speak history in seventeenth century Spain, and—most importantly—on what terms.

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